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ORGANIZATIONS IN

James D. Thompson

Professor of Business Administration and
Professor of Sociology, Indiana University

ACTION ACTION

Organizations In Action, by *James D. Thompson*, deals with the behavior of complex organizations as entities. Whereas most books on "organization behavior" focus on the behavior of people in organizational contexts, this book considers individual behavior only to the extent that it helps explain organizations. The book seeks the reasons for existing patterns of organizational design and structure, and methods of coordination, decision, and control. It seeks also to account for differences on these topics among organizations.

The book covers a wide range of purposive organizations—business, governmental, medical, educational, military—but rejects these categories for analytic purposes. It seeks a more useful way of characterizing and comparing organizations. Organizations are distinguished in terms of technologies and environments, rather than by traditional institutional labels.

The book offers 95 distinct, numbered propositions about the behavior of organizations—all intended to be appropriate regardless of the culture. The book and its propositions are organized consistently around the theme that organizations must meet and handle uncertainty.

Organizations In Action is grounded in already-available concepts and theories in the social and behavioral sciences. It does not pretend to offer a theory of administration, but seeks to extend the scientific base upon which an emerging administrative theory must rest.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- The central consistent theme is *uncertainty*—where it arises, and how organizations cope with it. By identifying different sources of uncertainty, the book indicates why various organizations differ in terms of design and structure, measurement of results, and processes of coordination, decision and control.
- Develops a framework that subsumes various “schools” of organization and administration, without forcing a commitment to or denial of any of them.
- Brief and concise.
- Multi-disciplinary treatment.
- Builds on and extends earlier publications.

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